



INShape 150 – Yoga

A unique fitness option

For several weeks we have discussed the benefits of resistance training and have given you some examples of basic body weight exercises that you can do to improve your strength and fitness. This week we would like to introduce you to another option that can supplement your strength training program: yoga. At first glance, yoga might seem like a form of physical activity better suited to improving flexibility. However, this surprisingly adaptable discipline offers a wide array of health benefits including improving muscle strength and endurance.

Yoga originated in India and has been practiced for at least 3,000 years. It has evolved into several forms. Each incorporates breathing, postures, and meditation as a means of improving mental, emotional, and physical well-being. In the West, the most commonly practiced form of yoga is "power" or vinyasa-style yoga. Power yoga is what you have most likely seen in fitness centers or on exercise DVDs. Power yoga is more fitness-based and focuses on balance, flexibility and strength. It often requires moving slowly from one pose to the other and supporting your body weight for extended periods of time. These precisely controlled movements improve strength and create long lean muscles. Regularly practicing yoga will improve many aspects of your well-being. Below are just a few of the numerous health benefits associated with yoga:



- **Flexibility** – No matter what the level of yoga, you will begin to notice improvements in your flexibility in a very short time. Yoga not only stretches your muscles but also your tendons and ligaments, increasing your range of motion.
- **Breathing** – Most of us pay little attention to how we breathe. Yoga focuses attention on breathing and makes us aware of how we use our lungs. Concentrated breathing improves lung capacity which impacts our endurance in other forms of physical activity.
- **Stress** – Yoga requires concentration as you make subtle adjustments to your body while transitioning from pose to pose. This places emphasis on the moment as your mind is focused on breathing and muscle positioning. Your daily stressors and distractions take a back seat as the calming nature of the workout washes over you. As a result, you will often feel refreshed and revitalized at the end of your yoga session.

Yoga offers a unique alternative to our traditional notions of exercise. Its benefits range from improved body control to meditative stress reduction. Yoga's many varieties and styles offer something for everyone. Do a little research and try a style that suits your needs. [Click here](#) for information on yoga studios in your area.

Eight Foods You Didn't Know You Should (and Could) Be Eating!

#5 Edamame

Many of you might already enjoy this delicious food, but for others this will be a welcome change to your table: Edamame are baby soybeans prepared while still in the pod. Edamame has been eaten in Asia for over 2,000 years and serves as a major protein source. This tasty bean is also packed with iron, tryptophan, and Omega-3 fatty acids. Iron helps our blood cells transport oxygen through our bodies, and tryptophan is an essential amino acid that can only be found in protein-rich foods. Let's not forget the importance of Omega-3s. Omega-3s are good fats used by your brain, heart, and eyes. They have also been shown to guard against depression. Edamame can be purchased frozen or fresh, and in pods or pod-free. Here are some ways to use this new food:

- Purchase edamame frozen and in pods, then boil them in salted water. When finished, drain and sprinkle sea salt over the edamame. To enjoy, squeeze the seeds out of the pod with your teeth. It makes a delicious, salty snack.
- Edamame without its pod can be tossed into salads, soups, and stews. It's a good way to pump up the protein and fiber!
- Make a side dish of frozen shelled edamame by sautéing them with chopped garlic. Sprinkle in some sesame seeds and sauté until sesame seeds are light brown!
- Some grocers have individual frozen packets that can be thrown in the microwave and enjoyed immediately.

Edamame Hummus

16 ounces edamame, cooked according to package directions
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 ¼ cup tahini (sesame paste)
 1/4 cup water
 3 cloves garlic
 juice from 1 lemon
 ¾ teaspoon salt (or more to taste)
 2 Tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

Optional seasonings: ½ teaspoon ground cumin and ¼ teaspoon ground coriander



1. Combine all ingredients in the bowl of a food processor and process until smooth. Adjust the amount of water if you prefer a thinner consistency.
2. Serve with cucumber slices, red bell pepper slices, and celery. Toast up high-fiber wraps as pita crisps! Enjoy!